

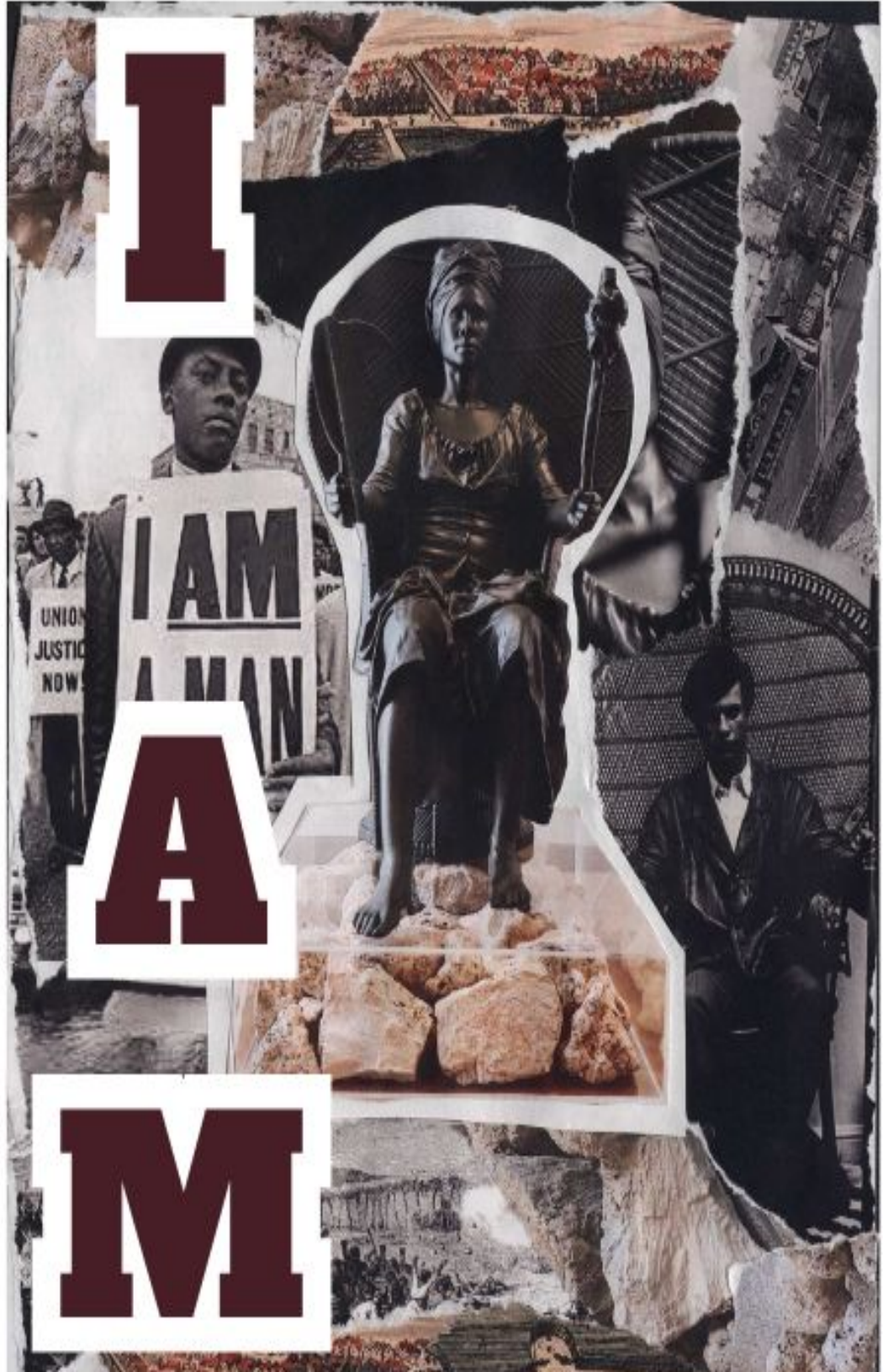
I

I AM

A MAN

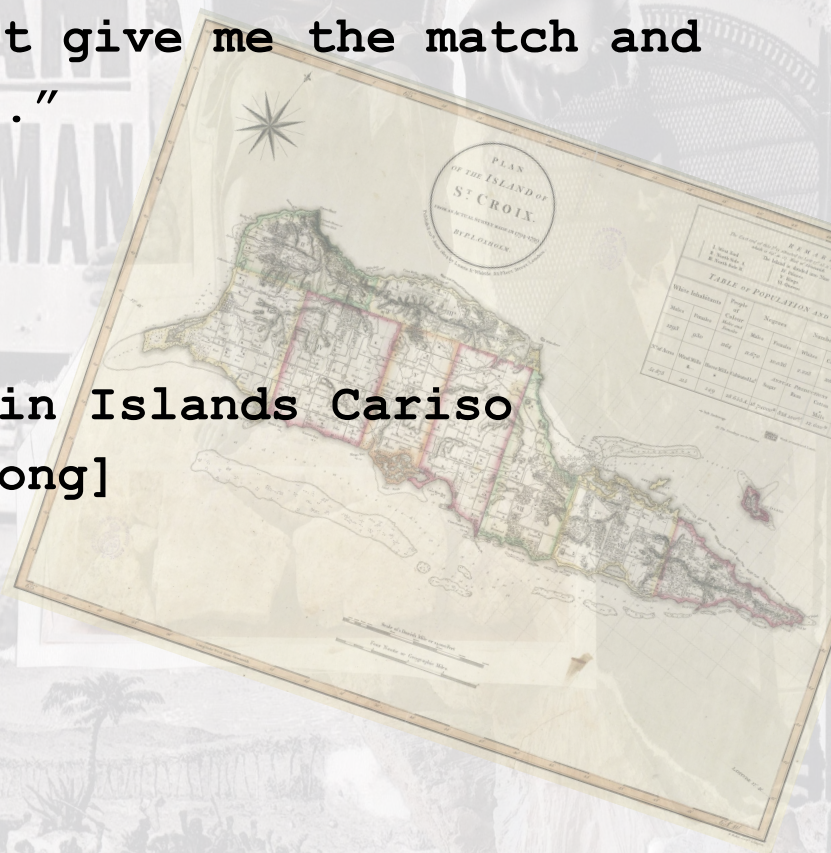
A

M



"Queen Mary, oh where you
gon' go burn? Queen Mary oh
where you gon' go burn?
Don't ask me nothin' at all.
Just give me the match and
oil."

- Virgin Islands Cariso
[folksong]





Dear Reader,

This zine aims to educate and begin a dialogue surrounding the 'I Am Queen Mary' statue in the lobby of Barnard College's Milstein Center for Teaching and Learning. She greets visitors and students in this campus hub to inspire visions of Black presence and resilience in historically colonial spaces. We urge you to further research her history, and engage more critically with black art and aesthetic representations of blackness within predominantly white institutions. We would like to thank the creators of this sculpture and the ancestors and descendants of radical tradition, for their contributions; and we would like to thank you for reading.

With Power,

Milstein Center Exhibitions

Who is Queen Mary?

ST. CROIX.

Causes Which Led to the
Recent Outbreak.

EVILS OF THE EXISTING LABOR SYSTEM.

Thirty Years of a Freedom Little
Better than Slavery.

While Mary Thomas and three other women were imprisoned for their valiant efforts, twelve other rebels were executed. Queen Mary's revolt is the subject of numerous songs, folk stories, and artistic representations that stand as a testament to the resilience of formerly enslaved peoples and their descendants.

Queen Mary Thomas led a rebellion against oppressive work conditions imposed by Danish colonial rulers of the island of St. Croix on **October 1, 1878**.

The two-week uprising is known as the **Fireburn revolt**, and it continues to have significance as a moment of resistance to colonialism in the Virgin Islands, and across the Black diaspora.

Mary Thomas
Dom. № 70, 1852.
Ifølge *Handb. for de i 1852*
Straffearbejde i *Sj. Th. huse*
Domt i 1ste Instants ved *Commissionens*
afleveret til Straffeanstalten den 19de Juli 1852
Straffetiden udløber den
afgaaet *af Høi. til Statsretten* den 19de Juli 1852
Fange. № 120
Dom af 23de
afgaaet *af Høi. til Statsretten* den 19de Juli 1852

As the detainee says, stood “one side¹⁴⁰”. The gang proceeded under the cries “our side” and “no more work for 10 cents”, and the woman **Mary Thomas**, who went by the name **Queen Mary**,

The *I Am Queen Mary* statue that we see at Barnard today is a scaled down version of the original *I am Queen Mary* monument in Denmark. Installed on March 31, 2018, the original *I Am Queen Mary* sits in front of West India Warehouse in Copenhagen, marking the 101st anniversary of Denmark's sale of the Virgin Islands to the United States. She sits 23 ft tall atop 2 ton plinth made of coral bricks from St. Croix, once shaped by enslaved laborers. Her presence calls attention to this warehouse as a site of the transatlantic trade, the profits of which still contribute to the modern day wealth of Europe and the United States. Made of polystyrene, the original statue eventually degraded due to bad weather. However, the artists' provocation began a layered public conversation about legacies of colonization and resistance that continues.

yes, St. Croix

→ is still U.S. owned!

Barnard acquired the replica in fall of 2019, a project commissioned by **Lisa Kim '96**. The face and body of the statue are 3D generated scans of the two artists, **Jeannette Ehlers and Lavaughn Belle CC'95**, expanding the position of Queen Mary to themselves as black women. While Ehlers grew up in Denmark without access to the history that would explain her experiences as a Black Danish person, Belle grew up in St. Croix surrounded by constant physical and social reminders of the colonial past.

"We merged to create a vessel - a portal for other stories to come through us. We have a narrative inside of us, it's inscribed in and on our bodies, and by connecting our two stories, we allow all these other people to join in, and to have a voice and a platform."

- La Vaughn Belle in Luna & Matias
"Who Is That? And How Come I Don't Know" (IDOART.DK)



About the Artists



Jeannette Ehlers (b.1973) is a Danish-Trinidadian video, photo and performance artist based in Copenhagen, Denmark. For years she has created artworks that delve into ethnicity and identity inspired by her own Danish and Caribbean background. Her pieces revolve around big questions and difficult issues, such as Denmark's role as a slave nation—a part of the Danish cultural heritage, which often gets overlooked in the general historiography. She has exhibited and performed in such institutions as AROS, Aarhus, Denmark, the Museum of Latin American Art, Los Angeles, the International Slavery Museum, Liverpool, the McKenna Museum of African American Art, New Orleans, Nikolaj Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center, Denmark and the Pérez Art Museum, Miami.

@jeannetteehlers



Jeannette Ehlers, *Whip It Good*, 2014



Jeannette Ehlers, *We're Magic. We're Real #3 (These Walls)*, 2021

About the Artists

La Vaughn Belle is a multidisciplinary artist from the Virgin Islands. For years her work has responded to questions surrounding the coloniality of the Virgin Islands, both in its present relationship to the US and it's past one to Denmark. Her work borrows from elements of architecture, literature, history, archeology and social protest to create narratives that challenge the colonial process. She is best known for her work reinterpreting the material artifacts of colonialism to create an alternative archive. She has exhibited her work in such institutions as the Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, El Museo del Barrio, NY, Arts of the Americas Museum, Washington, DC., the Royal Library of Denmark and the Centro de Wilfredo Lam, Cuba.

lavaughnbelle.com



La Vaughn Belle. *Storm (How to Imagine the Tropicalia as Monumental)*, 2021



La Vaughn Belle. *Between The Dusk And Dawn (How To Navigate An Unsettled Empire)*. Video. 2023

History

1671

The Danish West India Company creates a colony on the island of St. Thomas. Eventually they settle on the islands of St. Jan and St. Croix, bringing in enslaved people to build a sugar cane industry.

1848

In 1847, slavery on the island "ended," with a 12 year delay imposed by the Danish king. Moses Gotlieb, aka "General Buddhoe" leads a rebellion of over 8000 enslaved workers - forcing the governor to declare **immediate** emancipation.

1600s

Denmark/Norway occupy Ghana, trading enslaved African people, along with gold and ivory. Over the next 150 years, 111,000+ people are abducted to the Danish West Indies.

1792

Danish King outlaws the slave trade [effective in 1803], but the practice of slavery is still allowed.

Of St. Croix

1898

The US seizes power of Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Guam and the Philippines after the Spanish-American War, becoming an imperial power.

1905-1940

The US occupies several Caribbean and Latin American countries, including the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Haiti, and Nicaragua.

1878

After 30 years of working as "free" people under brutal conditions, Mary Thomas, leads the largest rebellion in Danish colonial history, destroying 55 plantations.

1917

During WWI, under threat of invasion - Denmark sells St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. Jan to the United States for \$25 million.

"Coupled with the long shadow cast by the Danish presence, the contemporary reality of American ownership of these islands shapes daily life. "

- From *Virgin Capital : Race, Gender, and Financialization in the US Virgin Islands (2021)* by Tami Navarro, PhD.

Making & Taking Space

For the past 50 years, Black students at Barnard have made strategic demands for substantive representation. In 1969, The Barnard Organization of Soul Sisters (BOSS), issued demands for physical space which would materialize in the form of the Zora Neale Hurston lounge. In 2017, DaMonique Ballou '17 created *A Place on the Wall*, an initiative to display enduring images of students from non-dominant identities. Phanesia Pharel '21 followed in 2018 with the *Bold Beautiful Black Barnard* project. (See these collections @ archives.barnard.edu)

The Ten Demands

*Proposals presented to
President Peterson by the Barnard
Organization of Soul Sisters
on February 24.*

Where there is a need to act and the individual fails to act, then he individual is responsible for the consequences that flow therefrom. We, the black students, believe that the educational structure at Barnard supports the status quo. We recognize the need for change. The demands which we are presenting are an earnest effort by the black students of Barnard College to initiate far change.

We feel that in the past the Barnard College administration has exhibited a lack of sensitivity and a lack of understanding concerning the problems of black students. Therefore, we demand that the Barnard Organization of Soul Sisters have the sole power to institute the following changes including the hiring of personnel and selection of committees and committee members. It is understood that all of the following programs will be included in total by Barnard College.

We seek and expect a relevant education.

We seek and expect a relevant education which we are not getting and which we are not alone in realizing the need for. White students have also felt the alienation. In a first step



Archives
BARNARD COLLEGE

We demand that the policies of the financial aid office be made more flexible, taking into consideration the special needs of the black students.

We do not feel that we should have to deal with the present financial aid office which continuously fails to recognize our individual needs and prefers to dictate to us what we ought to need. Most black students at Barnard depend on financial aid and have the right to know exactly what terms and by what criterion financial aid is given. We feel that the unrealistic policies of financial aid need to be revamped.

We want periodicals, books, and records relevant to our black culture in the library.

The Black Women of Barnard College demand periodicals, books, and records which are relevant to black culture to be placed in Lehman Library as a necessity for making the educational structure of this college relevant to the black student and for educating the uninformed non-black Barnard student body.

We demand an orientation program designed for and administered by black students.

The Barnard Organization of Soul Sisters (now **Barnard Organization of Soul and Solidarity**) wrote "The Ten Demands" to Barnard College President (1969)

"Students should be able to see themselves [in a significant way] at Barnard on their way to class, work or while studying." - Ballou '17

"I wanted to create this event where we explore the different facets of blackness...[there are] so many ways to be a black person here." - Pharel '21

**BOLD.
BEAUTIFUL.
BLACK.
AT BARNARD.**

BOSS Student T-Shirt
(2018)

To Current Black Barnard Students...

How do you celebrate your blackness at Barnard?

by surrounding myself with my beautiful black friends who affirm me!

by wearing my natural hair and braids to class and around campus

I incorporate Zulu or Swahili words into my sentences when communicating with peers

by repping my Divine 9: Alpha Kappa Alpha, Sorority Incorporated

by playing music around campus and creating an alternative sonic reality

Artists At Barnard



Renée Green

B. 1959 Cleveland, OH

Renée Green is Barnard's fifth Orzeck Artist in Residence. Green is known globally for her multimedia art, which examines how relationships and exchanges — both over time and in present moments — are inscribed into public or private memories.

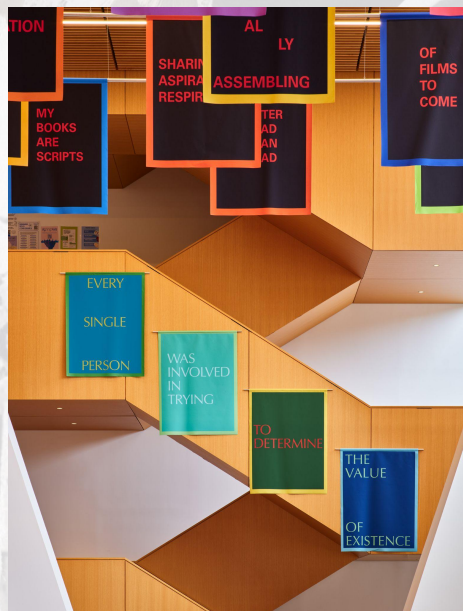


Kehinde Wiley

B. 1977 Los Angeles, CA

Kehinde Wiley is a contemporary artists whose vibrant paintings of contemporary African-Diasporic people subvert the hierarchies and conventions of classical portraiture. Two works by Kehinde Wiley were installed in 2021 at Barnard College, in Milbank Hall.

RENÉE GREEN



Space Poem #8.1 (Vide ma tête), 2022–2023



What Time Is It? (GLB), 2022

Every Single Person (LW), 2022

Space Poem #8.1 (Vide ma tête) is a self-reflective artwork considering the life and trajectory of an artist. Written by Green, this work combines her intellect with her interest in printmaking and a conceptual approach to space. *What Time Is It? (GLB)* quotes philosopher and political activist Grace Lee Boggs' 35. *Every Single Person (LW)* (2022) references an existential statement by conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner.

KEHINDE WILEY



Portrait of Savannah
Essah, 2020
Oil on Linen
94 ¼ x 62 ½ inches



Portrait of Dorinda
Essah, 2020
Oil on Linen
94 ½ x 69 1¼ inches

Wiley depicts these women as autonomous and powerful in this portraits that speak to conventions of classic portraiture while addressing contemporary themes of black representation. The large-scale, oil-on-linen paintings frame Access Barnard, an initiative which supports students who identify as first-generation, low-income, and international.

Further Learning

To learn more about *I Am Queen Mary* at Barnard and beyond, check out videos, articles, and other resources on this page:



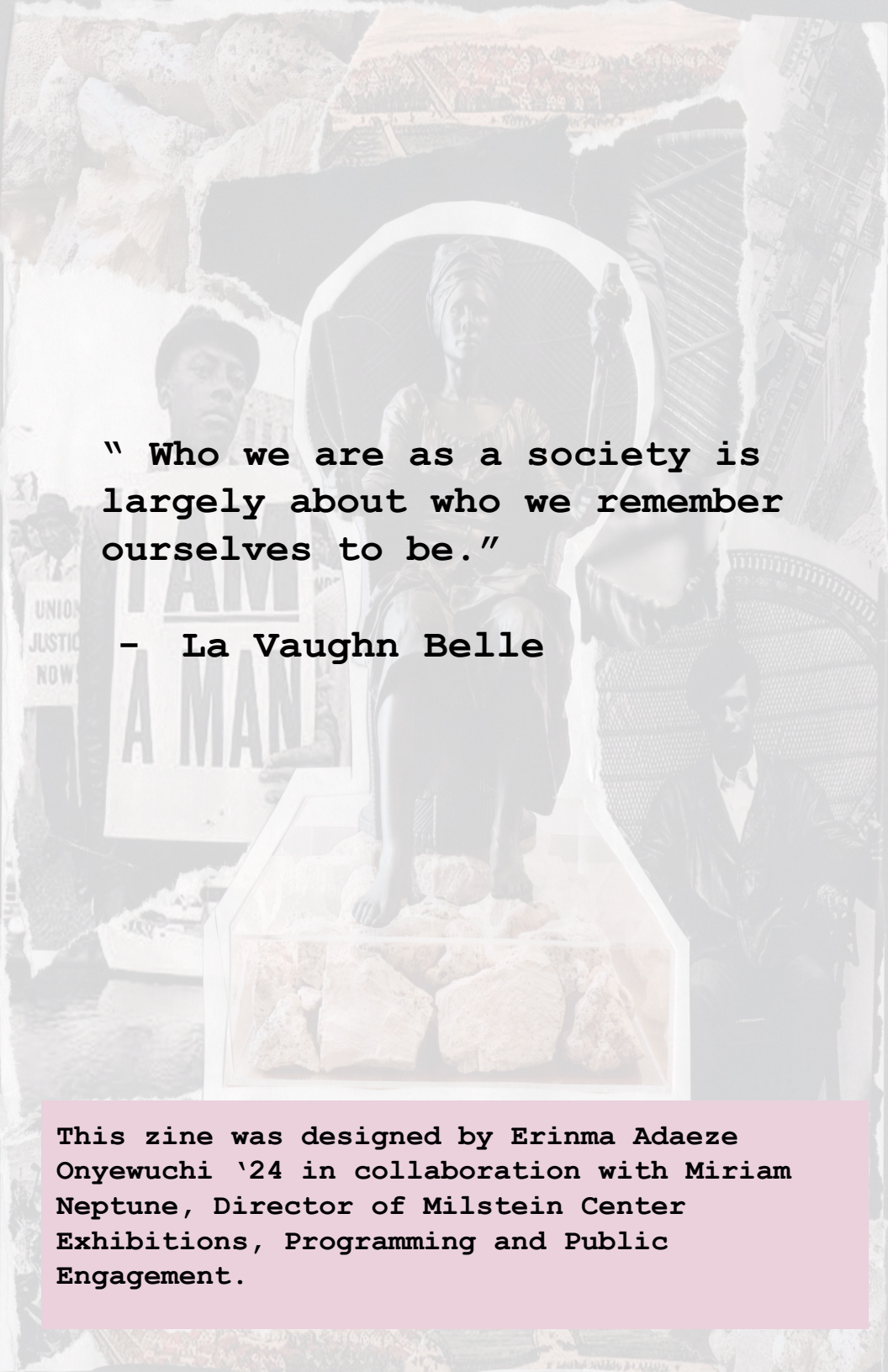
library.barnard.edu/i-am-queen-mary



"She tells us that, if there are systems that are incredibly unjust, you can actually be willing to sacrifice everything to try to change them."

La Vaughn Belle about Queen Mary
DR, Orientering (6th of March 2021)

Posts from @iamqueenmaryofficial



" Who we are as a society is
largely about who we remember
ourselves to be."

- La Vaughn Belle

This zine was designed by Erinma Adaeze
Onyewuchi '24 in collaboration with Miriam
Neptune, Director of Milstein Center
Exhibitions, Programming and Public
Engagement.